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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 000076

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KJUS](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PL](#)  
SUBJECT: PM TUSK'S NEW SHERIFF - JUSTICE MINISTER ANDRZEJ  
CZUMA

Classified By: Political Counselor Daniel Sainz for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Unlike his bookish predecessor, Poland's new Justice Minister, Andrzej Czuma -- one of the fathers of Poland's early anti-Communist movements and a former U.S. resident (1986-2005) -- is expected to take on the Polish judiciary's daunting challenges in a more visible, determined and uncompromising way. Czuma's views closely parallel those of the opposition Law and Justice (PiS) party, so much so that Czuma has been compared (favorably) with another former justice minister, President Lech Kaczynski. Czuma, who said his top priority is to make citizens feel safer, is expected to be more engaged in political issues than his predecessor. It is not yet clear whether Czuma's uncompromising approach can root out corruption within Poland's judicial system. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On January 22, PM Tusk appointed seventy-year-old Civic Platform MP Andrzej Czuma -- a 20-year former resident of the United States -- to become Poland's new Justice Minister. Czuma will replace former minister Zbigniew Cwiakalski, who resigned January 20 following the suicide of a prisoner convicted in the brutal murder of Krzysztof Olewnik in 2003. Two other prisoners convicted in the same case committed suicide in 2008. Justice Ministry investigators and prosecutors were roundly criticized for conducting a shoddy criminal investigation of the murder. Media have since alleged that the prisoner deaths were not suicides, but the result of a criminal conspiracy, a charge Cwiakalski denied. Czuma said he plans to meet with the Olewnik family on January 26.

¶3. (C) In addition to investigating the allegations surrounding the Olewnik case, Czuma will face a judiciary in disarray -- including multi-year case backlogs, overcrowded prisons, outdated administrative structures, and corruption. At a press conference following his appointment, Czuma said his first priority would be to "make citizens feel safer." He also promised to fix Poland's prison system. Although Czuma has a law degree, he has no experience as a prosecutor, making it less likely that he will also serve as Prosecutor General, as past Justice Ministers have done.

¶4. (C) While Czuma's appointment surprised Poland's political establishment, public reaction has been largely positive. In announcing the appointment, Tusk described Czuma as a man who "knows the meaning of justice and the rule of law." Media commentators have compared Czuma (favorably) to President Lech Kaczynski, who generally earned high marks as Justice Minister (2000-2001). In contrast to the bookish, liberal Cwiakalski (a law professor), Czuma is expected to be more political and more visible in the media. (NB: Cwiakalski has alleged that Tusk accepted his resignation because he had refused to be a government "showman.") Czuma's views are strikingly similar to those of the opposition Law and Justice

(PiS) party, e.g., Czuma has advocated relaxing restrictions on gun ownership. Immediately after the announcement, a Presidential Chancellery spokesman said Kaczynski would back Czuma's nomination. Others within PiS, while complimentary of Czuma, dismissed the appointment as political opportunism.

Former PiS Justice Minister Zbigniew Ziobro blasted Czuma's perceived lack of relevant experience, and PiS MP Jacek Kurski called the appointment an "act of desperation" on Tusk's part.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: Although he holds strong views, Czuma is well respected within Poland's political establishment. Since his return to Poland, he has maintained a low profile in the media. Czuma's appointment will certainly make it more difficult for PiS to criticize the Government's law and justice policies, and could be part of a broader strategy of "stealing" PiS issues, as reflected in the PO's recent support for chemical castration of sex offenders. Czuma's extensive exposure to the United States could present an opening to improve U.S.-Polish and U.S.-EU law enforcement cooperation. It is not yet clear whether Czuma's uncompromising approach will be effective in confronting the daunting challenges facing Poland's judiciary, particularly corruption.

¶6. (C) BIO NOTE: Czuma joined the anti-Communist opposition as a law student at Warsaw University (1958-1963). In 1971 he was sentenced for counter-revolutionary activities to seven years in prison, along with now Deputy Sejm Speaker Stefan Niesiolowski, for organizing the Movement in Defense of Civic and Human Rights. He was released after four years. In 1980, he was imprisoned for three months (along with

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current Sejm Speaker Bronislaw Komorowski) for organizing an opposition demonstration. According to Komorowski, Czuma's underground code-name was "Pomnik" (monument), a testament to his willingness to go to prison rather than compromise his principles. In 1981-1982, Czuma spent 12 months in an internment camp for his Solidarity activities. In 1986, he emigrated to the United States where he worked as a physical laborer and later established a Polish radio station. He returned to Poland in 2005, and has been an MP (Civic Platform, PO) since 2006.

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